

LERU POLICY BRIEF
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LERU's comments on the Lamy report on maximising the impact of EU research and innovation programmes

As stated in the LERU press release of 3 July 2017, LERU welcomes the report "**LAB-FAB-APP, Investing in the European future we want**" on maximising the impact of EU research and innovation programmes. The report is an important element in the larger discussion of the EU budget. LERU is convinced the report is useful to all stakeholders to reflect on, to prepare for the next Framework Programme (FP) for Research and Innovation (R&I), and to foster a broader discussion on the future of the research policy landscape in Europe.

Commenting on the 11 recommendations of the Lamy report, LERU wishes to point out the following:

1/ Prioritise research and innovation in EU and national budgets

The FP9 budget put forward by the high-level group (120bn euro) is in line with LERU's FP9 paper and the European Parliament. However, opposition is to be expected from the Council (EU member states), who have a history of squeezing the (multi-)annual R&I budgets (cf. LERU "[Give research a break](#)" and "[Horizon 2020 is not a lemon! Stop squeezing it!](#)"). **LERU calls on all stakeholders to commit to a strong EU budget for R&I.**

In its just published reflection paper on the future of EU finances, the European Commission has pointed out that every euro spent from the EU budget will have to have added value. We welcome the fact it mentions **pooling research at EU level can avoid duplication and have a clear EU added value**. We agree with Commissioner [Oettinger](#) that "in the age of Brexit and the emergence of new priorities such as migration and defence", putting together an EU budget comes close to "squaring the circle."

It must be understood that, as long as there will be no next EU multi-annual budget proposal, there will be no next FP proposal. Although the two processes run separately, the former has a clear effect on the latter. Since we know the development and approval process of each of them to be long and complicated, **LERU is concerned that a timely delivery of FP9 may become compromised**, especially since there will be elections for a new European Parliament and a new Commission will be appointed in 2019.

2/ Build a true EU innovation policy that creates future markets

Although LERU agrees with the innovation-oriented agenda, it is also evident that frontier research is the bedrock of innovation and "garage innovation" is the exception. Of course, social and non-research-based innovation play a certain role, but **let us not forget that**

innovation crucially depends on research performed at universities and other research organisations. Innovation will dry up if the bedrock of research is not adequately supported.

The nascent **European Innovation Council (EIC)** is too focused on a narrow definition of innovation. **No academic innovation experts are part of the present High Level Group; one or more should be appointed** as soon as possible. EIC's primary role should be to advise the EC on innovation policy and on the development, use and efficiency of the EC's innovation instruments. **The EIC should not act as a funding mechanism.** Streamlining and optimising these instruments should be a key responsibility of the EIC.

Industrial doctorates or industry fellowships are useful, but must not be favoured to the detriment of the schemes to support non-innovation-focused research or training.

3/ Educate for the future and invest in people who will make the change

LERU recognises the importance of the higher education modernisation agenda, and of stimulating the open science agenda, also in universities. At the same time it is important to not overly complicate the FP. It should continue to be manageable and its funding should be focused on a limited number of objectives. **LERU would therefore prefer to stimulate open science through FP9's rules of participation (and the model grant agreement) instead of creating e.g. a European university label.**

LERU wants a better link between research, innovation and education but underlines this should be done by concretely linking education to FP9-funded projects, e.g. by engaging students in FP9 projects or stimulating researchers to teach about their FP9-funded research, as suggested in the LERU FP9 paper. **FP9 should promote, wherever appropriate, teaching and professional development, as part of an academic career.** The ERC and MSCA are hallmarks of research excellence that need to be treasured and protected for the future.

LERU has proposed ways in which interdisciplinarity can be strengthened in a [2016 paper](#). The LERU paper on FP9 argues that **interdisciplinary projects should be the core of collaborative research in the next FP and that interdisciplinarity must be part of the evaluation criteria.**

Not ALL EU funding programmes should have innovation objectives, i.e. it is not only about "labs-fabs-apps". MSCA could incorporate industry research fellowships. However, this can only happen if the overall MSCA budget is increased considerably, because the programme is very popular, (generally) oversubscribed and success rates are too low.

4/ Design the EU R&I programme for greater impact

LERU very much supports the focus on purpose and impact for FP9, instead of instruments, TRLs, disciplines, prescriptive topics or industry sectors, as proposed in the Lamy group report. However, **industry, society and the scientific community should together set the agenda for how the next FP will support collaborative projects involving all these actors.** LERU is not opposed to a three-pillar structure for FP9, as long as all collaborative funding is brought together, creating one strong collaborative research and innovation programme that aims at funding interdisciplinary, international and cross-sectoral projects.

More flexible, overarching and non-prescriptive calls for proposals, both top-down and bottom-up, echo very well the LERU ideas for a collaborative research and innovation programme in FP9. The Lamy group report does not provide any detail on how

this should be put into practice. The **LERU paper, however, makes very concrete suggestions in this regard.**

LERU also shares the Lamy group's emphasis on the importance of a good and robust evaluation process. Providing meaningful feedback to applicants is crucial, as well as involving a sufficient number of experts that are well selected, briefed and monitored. **LERU does not agree with the proposal for the EIC to be the driver for designing new evaluation and selection processes**, especially if these are across the board. The EIC role in this should be limited to programmes or instruments that are purely innovation-focused, not including collaborative R&I. LERU's proposal for the future evaluation process, featuring standing panels, is inspired by the ERC's success recipe for evaluation, as suggested by the Lamy report.

Evaluation should also in FP9 be based on assessment of the excellence of the proposal. Also on this LERU agrees with the report. That excellence should be addressed on the basis of the pillar's objectives is a given. As mentioned in the LERU FP9 paper, excellence is the quality of the work proposed, work that is obviously different when applying for different parts of the FP.

5/ Adopt a mission-oriented, impact-focused approach to address global challenges

Although the wrapping might be different, the content of what the Lamy group proposes is well in line with LERU's FP9 ideas. Broad topics are 'missions', with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as reference framework. A simple and flexible co-fund mechanism is very close to LERU's ideas on Joint Initiatives. And the wide stakeholder debate among citizens, scientists and innovators on the potential future R&I missions in Europe would generate a similar input and result as the bottom-up consultation process for collaborative R&I as suggested in the LERU paper.

Two important ideas of the LERU FP9 proposal do not surface in the Lamy group report, namely clustering of projects addressing the same 'mission' and providing follow-up funding for FP projects, two ideas which LERU believes crucial to maximising the impact of the FP.

It is however good to see that the Lamy group realises that increasing impact of the FP is not done through an increased focus on expected impact of projects. These are difficult to predict and lead to projects promising "innovation heaven". **Defining expected impact across an entire portfolio of activities, as suggested in the Lamy group report, could be a good alternative.**

The Lamy report rightly emphasises the importance of a full integration of social sciences and humanities and the need for SSH researchers to take the lead on some missions when they concern the big societal questions of our time. **LERU wishes to stress that all SDGs would and should benefit from contributions of social sciences and humanities (SSH) research.** The word "humanities" features only once in the Lamy report. As often happens, SSH risks being given a perfunctory nod or "assistive role", rather than being positioned at the centre of "labs, fabs and apps". The report wants to get across the idea that research plays a key role in, with, for society (in a way that matters for real people and real lives) but, apart from the SSH paragraph in section 5, the report unfortunately underplays the importance of SSH research.

6/ Rationalise the EU funding landscape and achieve synergy with structural funds

Rationalising and downsizing the number of instruments in the EU funding landscape is indeed something the EU should look into for the next MFF. Having one set of rules for

R&I funding, as suggested in the LERU FP9 paper, would already be an important step in the direction of a one-stop-shop for R&I funding.

LERU agrees with the Lamy group that synergies between the R&I FP and the Structural Funds should be stimulated and facilitated instead of hampered by State Aid rules. **LERU however opposes the call for ring-fencing budgets within the R&I FP for widening participation. It is within the Structural Funds that budget should be earmarked for synergies, to support core R&I activities or projects** (examples can be found in the LERU FP9 paper). It should not be the R&I FP that supports Structural Funds' objectives or smart specialisation strategies. LERU agrees that different EU instruments and policies should reinforce each other. There must however remain a clear difference between the aim of each EU policy domain and the related funding programmes.

7/ Simplify further

The continued emphasis on **simplifying the FP, accepting usual accounting practices of beneficiaries and reducing the audit burden can only be applauded**, especially by an organisation like LERU that has been a champion for simplification of the FP for almost a decade.

The choice proposed in the Lamy group report between **cost-based or lump-sum payments is however not likely to lead to further simplification, on the contrary**. Offering this choice could extend the time to grant, create two 'types' of beneficiaries or complicate things for project coordinators. And before considering any choice, the use of lump-sum funding should be assessed on the basis of the upcoming pilots in H2020. Also for the use of lump sums, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

8/ Mobilise and involve citizens

LERU supports citizen science because it can broaden the scope of research, increase the quantity of research results and improve the quality. But to do so it **must also adhere to what are considered fundamental research principles, methods and procedures to ensure accuracy and validity**.

A recent [LERU paper on citizen science](#) offers 13 recommendations for universities, research funding organisations and policy makers, from raising awareness and supporting citizen science in ethically sound ways, to developing ways of assessing and recognising citizen science in research funding and evaluation processes.

LERU hopes that the European Commission will continue to develop and stimulate citizen science, which fits very well with its "Open Science" and "Responsible Research and Innovation" policy making agendas.

9/ Better align EU and national R&I investment

LERU agrees that EU and national R&I investment should be better aligned and that it is a difficult task. A division of labour should be established and mutually respected, taking into account complementarities and added value. An appropriate governance model for such an alignment must be carefully thought through, since it will have important financial and other consequences.

While member states have to take care to remove local barriers to a smoothly functioning ERA, **LERU would not go as far as subjecting national R&I strategies "to EU-supported international peer review"**. Instead, they should continue to be dealt with in the European Semester exercise.

10/ Make international R&I cooperation a trademark of EU research and innovation

Many challenges faced by society and industry are not Europe-specific but require collaboration with the rest of the world. Stimulating third-country participation is important and aligning the FP9 collaborative research and innovation programme with the UN sustainable development goals could help attract these partners, as stipulated in both the LERU FP9 paper and the Lamy report.

Flagging of topics that are particularly suitable for international cooperation in FP9 is a good mechanism that was introduced in the current FP.

LERU agrees with the Lamy report that except in cases of specific strategic relevance, **the accessibility to funding for research by international partners should be reciprocal.**

It is important that association to FP9 is limited to countries of strategic importance (excellence-based) to the EU's research and innovation landscape, as both LERU and the Lamy report argue. From that perspective, LERU reiterates the point made in its FP9 paper and in the Lamy report that **UK universities, irrespective of Brexit, should be able to participate in FP9 since they are an undeniably strong part of the European Research Area.**

11/ Capture and better communicate impact

Measuring impact needs to happen at the level of the FP and of projects; this will require different methods and indicators. The LERU FP9 paper states that the EC should broaden its views on impact, and should see it, as argued in the recent LERU paper "[Productive interactions](#)", **as a dynamic, open and networked process.** In the latter paper, LERU urges funders, policy makers and others to 1/ temper their expectations when it comes to the question of predicting the outcome(s) of grant applications, since the production of knowledge is non-linear and full of unpredictabilities, 2/ to support and incentivise universities in their endeavours to embrace a broad impact agenda, and 3/ to engage with universities in a dialogue to develop sensible impact policies.

LERU agrees with the general approach to impact in the Lamy report, although it has reservations about three points. Firstly, when expressing the need for a definition of impact beyond GDP, **impact on people's lives is not mentioned.** LERU considers this to be a very important aspect of impact of the FP which is to be duly taken into account.

Secondly, while communicating about science should be part of researchers' careers and it can be required for EU-funded projects, it is up to the universities, as employers of researchers and with the responsibilities this entails, to make sure that researchers' career development and reward systems are attractive, responsive to new needs and flexible to accommodate researchers' varying career circumstances.

Thirdly, LERU agrees with the report's ambition for the EC and the member states to develop an action plan for how to make science and citizens talk, but **it is doubtful that an "EU University" is the best label for this.**